

3/c

Meeting Began: 8:30 a.m.
Meeting Ended: 10:06 a.m.

PART I

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING

WITH THE
DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

January 30, 1968
In the Mansion

NR

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page Denied

Page Denied

Page Denied

Page Denied

Page Denied

Page Denied

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 8 -

NR

Senator Byrd: Thank you very much for the briefing. I think the actions which have been taken are prudent and wise. On another matter, I am very concerned about the build up at Khesanh. I have been told that we have 5,000 troops there compared with 40,000 enemy troops. Are we prepared for this attack?

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 9 -

The President: This has been a matter of great concern to me. I met with the Joint Chiefs yesterday. I went around the table and got their answers to these questions. In addition, I have it in writing that they are prepared.

I asked, "Have we done all we should do?" They said yes. I asked, "Are we convinced our forces are adequate?" They said yes.

I asked should we withdraw from Korea. They said no, that Khesanh is important to us militarily and psychologically.

Senator Sparkman: I appreciate this briefing. I must interrupt to say that I must leave because of the hearing on the gold cover.

Senator Long: The American people are concerned about the damage to their national honor. I think we should take more firm military action.

The President: Russell, if you will just listen a minute you will see that we are taking the action we believe to be right. There are 700 enemy dead now as a result of our actions in Vietnam. That is not soft.

Walt Rostow: During the first day of TET the enemy attacked in 10 places in Vietnam. Six were substantial attacks.

At 6:00 a.m. today General Westmoreland said the enemy suffered the highest killed in one day of the war. They counted 700 enemy dead. The ratio of enemy killed to U.S. killed runs about 5 to 1.

The enemy is trying to terrorize the people. Reports said the ARVN performed very well. Khesanh's air field is open.

General Wheeler: On the matter of your question, Senator Byrd, about 5,000 U.S. troops versus 40,000 enemy troops. Khesanh is in very rugged areas. There are 5,900 U.S. troops in the Khesanh Garrison. These are support troops including 26th Marines and a battalion of the ARVN. In support of this there are 105 millimeter, 155 millimeter and 8 inch guns.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 10 -

There are 175 millimeter guns operating from the nearby "rockpile." There are 14 more 175 millimeter guns 14 miles east.

Off the coast, there is a force of cruisers and destroyers which can target on the enemy.

There are 4 North Vietnam divisions at Khesanh. We have available the 1st U.S. Infantry Division. We have one additional ARVN Division available with units which can be dispatched quickly. There are 39,968 friendly forces versus 38,590 enemy forces. Roughly, there are 40,000 allied troops to match the 40,000 enemy. We think we are ready to take on any contingency.

In addition, there are 40 B-52 sorties and 500 tactical air sorties in the area Niagara each day hitting the enemy.

I talked with General Westmoreland yesterday. He had been in the area and conferred with senior field commanders. He placed the entire field operation under his deputy General Abrams. He has as his air deputy General Momyer.

General Westmoreland is confident he can hold the position. To abandon it would be to step backward. The Joint Chiefs agree with General Westmoreland. The Joint Chiefs believe that he can hold and that he should hold.

General Westmoreland considers it an opportunity to inflict heavy casualties on North Vietnam. We have 6,000 men there, and 34,000 available. It is 40,000 versus 40,000.

NR

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page Denied

Page Denied